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ABSTRACT

Parent enabling policies that have been initiated in five states are described in this report. In addition to the strong link between parental involvement and improvements in their children's educational performance, further evidence suggests that differences in child-rearing styles also affect child development and academic achievement. Policy reforms to enhance parent enabling are presented in three categories--parent involvement, direct parent counseling and education, and school choice plans. Policy initiatives in five states--Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Minnesota, and Wisconsin--are described and a profile of one area private school is offered. A conclusion is that the state role in developing parent enabling policies is to strengthen and focus the parental role, rather than to replace it. Two tables are included. (14 references) (LMI)

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Parent Enabling Policies for States

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- To improve the quality and effectiveness of state legislatures,
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Parent Enabling Policies for States

by

Theodor Rebarber

A joint project of the National Conference of State Legislatures
and the Vanderbilt University Educational Excellence Network

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Executive Summary

In *A Nation at Risk,* then-Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, warned that the deplorable state of American education endangers both our standing in the global economy and our domestic peace and civic culture. He likened it to an act of war by a hostile power. Most states responded with genuine efforts to enhance the quality of public schools. "First-wave" reforms focused on measurable standards such as stricter graduation requirements, higher teacher salaries, and minimum competency tests for teachers.

At the end of the 1990s, we find little effect from these reforms. Overall, seventeen-year olds are learning no more today than 20 years ago; despite much effort and a good deal of money spent, academic performance for the majority of students remains stagnant. Though some improvements exist among minorities, a substantial gap remains between them and most students, and the number of all pupils achieving at the highest levels has actually decreased slightly.

Current levels are far below what today's students will need in the society of the twenty-first century, too low even for today's computer-driven economy. On international comparisons, American students are consistently outperformed by students in almost all industrialized nations, especially Germany, Japan, and South Korea.

As we approach what some call the "second wave" of reform since *Nation at Risk,* new proposals that seek to address fundamental inadequacies in the current system are before many state legislatures.

With the help of his education secretary, Lamar Alexander, President Bush recently proposed *America 2000,* a multi-faceted reform plan for the nation. The strategy includes a number of ideas with which states and localities have experimented in recent years—outcome-based national assessments tagged to world-class standards, academies in each state aim to improve the training of teachers and principals, assistance to implement choice plans, model restructured schools for each congressional district.

When considering these ideas, most of which are voluntary, legislators need to understand the underlying principles and rationales for each. Discussion of these concepts is contained in these three handbooks. They are a resource for busy elected officials, their aides, and interested citizens trying to make sense of complex—sometimes controversial—policy questions.

Better Education Through Informed Legislation, the final product of a two-year project to inform legislators about major education-reform topics, is co-sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures, a nonprofit, bipartisan organization that serves state legislatures; and the Vanderbilt University Educational Excellence Network, an association of more than 1700 reform-minded educators, scholars, policymakers, and journalists.

Better Education Through Informed Legislation emphasizes reform at the state level and reflects a shift in the focus of education policy making begun in the late 1970s. While opportunities for innovation and initiative at the local level remain, state legislators are central to state education policy making and most observers agree that states will lead policy reform in the 1990s.

SUMMARY

In addition to the strong link between parents' involvement with their children's education and improved performance in school by those youngsters, there is further evidence that different styles of child-rearing may also have a major impact on child development and academic achievement.

Policymakers recently began to devote substantial attention to this field. Reforms in the area of parent enabling may be divided into three categories, those that:

1. **Encourage parent involvement in and with the school;**

2. **Allow parents to play a more effective role in their children's education, administered either by the school or by local community-education centers;**

3. **Increase parents' responsibility and attention to education by allowing them to select their children's schools.**

Policies that fall into the first category include new technology and programs that encourage communication between parents and school professionals; and, in a few cases provide parents a role in determining school policy. Reforms of the latter type are discussed in *State Policies for School Restructuring*.

Category 2 reforms provide parent education and counseling—often in the home—either on general parenting skills or on matters directly related to academic performance. Illinois, California, Tennessee, and other states provide financial support to local initiatives that include programs in categories 1 and 2. Missouri's Parents as Teachers Program (PAT) for families with very young children provides training in general parenting skill and shows parents how to teach basic concepts, such as sizes and colors.

In Arkansas, the governor and his wife have worked to popularize the Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), a parent-education program for families with four- and five-year-old children. HIPPY involves frequent home visits in which parents are provided with educational materials they can use to teach their children important lessons to prepare them for school, including reading and problem-solving skills.

In category 3, Minnesota was the first jurisdiction to pass a statewide choice plan. Its open-enrollment program allows students to attend public schools regardless of district boundaries. The state's postsecondary options program allows high school juniors and seniors to attend public or private postsecondary institutions at public expense. In Wisconsin the state legislature enacted a choice plan that allows some low-income Milwaukee youngsters to use state funds to attend private schools. Nearly 400 inner-city students took advantage of this program, which is currently under legal challenge.

The three parent-enabling approaches are complementary, though not dependent on each other. Choice increases parents' power and responsibility, parent-education programs show parents how to intervene effectively, and school-involvement programs improve communication and foster joint responsibility and coordination.

INTRODUCTION

Parents are a child's first and most important teachers; they serve as primary role models for their children's values and behaviors. Many studies find a strong link between parental involvement in a child's education and the child's performance in school. It seems that children place greater importance on their progress in school when their parents pay more attention to it.

A 1987 study by the U.S. Department of Education found that even such casual, education-related family activities as teaching young children about numbers,or the alphabet, are important factors in later academic achievement, regardless of race or socioeconomic factors.

Researcher Anne T. Henderson (1987), in a synthesis of several studies, concluded that a number of positive effects are associated with parental involvement and strong communication between the school and home. Students in schools with good parent–school interaction consistently outperform their peers in schools without it. They do better on standardized tests, despite similar backgrounds and ability levels. The studies also indicate that students who were failing tended to improve dramatically after parents became more involved in their education.

There is increasing evidence that particular styles of childrearing have a strong effect on both children's behavior and school performance. In a survey of 8,000 San Francisco high school students, Sanford M. Dornbusch of Stanford found that children with what he termed "authoritative" parents tend to have better grades, are more responsible and independent, and have more developed social and cognitive skills. Authoritative parents set clear expectations and rules of behavior for their children but are willing to engage in verbal give-and-take and recognize the legitimate rights of both children and adults (Jennings 1990).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The critical role parents play in their children's education, though by now widely recognized, only recently became an area of direct concern for American policymakers. A number of reforms aimed at enhancing the parental role in education were undertaken. Among these, three broad categories may be discerned:

1. **Efforts to encourage parent involvement in school activities** range over a broad spectrum, from bake sales, to improved communication technology that fosters contact between parents and teachers, to a direct parent role in setting fundamental school policies.

2. **Parent counseling and education** are designed to show mothers and fathers how to play a more effective role in their children's education.

3. **Choice plans** direct parents' attention to their children's education by increasing parental responsibility to choose the most appropriate school or education program.

Involvement/Influence

Activities in the first category, in the limited form of local Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs) and informal community organizations, are probably the oldest and most widespread of the three. Unfortunately, such limited appeals for involvement tend to engage primarily those parents already predisposed to an active role, not the ones who are most important to reach.

Localities and states, therefore, try a number of innovative ways to improve communication between schools and a larger percentage of parents. One Connecticut school installed phones in every classroom so that teachers could call parents at any time. The state of Hawaii established an administrative leave policy that grants state employees who are parents two hours of time off per child, each semester, to meet with their child's teacher.

In Tennessee, a technology-based, parent-involvement program was introduced at a local middle school in 1989. Entitled the Trans*Parent* School Model by its creator, Vanderbilt education professor Jerold P. Bauch, the program uses answering machines (or electronic mail) which parents contact to hear a message describing homework or school activities and a computer-driven calling system that makes large numbers of repeat calls to parents with a teacher's recorded message. According to a follow-up evaluation, the pilot program succeeded in engaging large numbers of parents who previously had little contact with the schools, especially low-income parents who tend to be the most difficult to reach. The children of parents who became frequent users of the system showed significant improvement in school-related activities, such as homework completion (Bauch 1989).

The California state Board of Education adopted an explicit policy to encourage parent involvement and provides assistance to localities seeking to implement programs. Tennessee, profiled later in a section of this handbook, appropriated $! million in 1986 to start a state initiative to expand existing local programs and add new ones; funds are available for programs that target parent education (category 2), as well as those that focus on parent involvement (category 1).

A number of states and localities are experimenting with more formal methods of involving parents, such as including parents on advisory school-improvement councils made up of teachers and school administrators. In a few localities—including Dade County, Florida; Rochester, New York; and Los Angeles, California—such councils wield substantive authority over decisions affecting the school, such as curriculum and class schedules. In the most far-reaching version of such attempts to date, Illinois enacted legislation that put parents in the majority on school councils in every Chicago

public school; these councils exercise control over a broad range of matters, including authority to hire and fire the school principal. Due to their strong connection to decentralization and restructuring, both the Chicago and Dade County reforms are discussed in *State Policies for School Restructuring*.

Direct Parent Education

The second type of parent enabling, parent education and counseling, is the most direct of the three approaches. Choice and parental involvement schemes are intended to increase parents' interest in their children's education, as well as their level of *interaction* with its providers; programs that reach out to parents to provide them with education and counseling also attempt to show parents *how best to use* such interest and interaction at home and at school, and to become better parents.

Many such efforts are underway in the United States and several foreign countries, including Israel, Canada, and Turkey. One of the largest in the United States, Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education Program, serves 165,000 parents and preschool children. While much may be known about the correlation between parent involvement and student performance, to date there is little evidence of exactly which parent-education programs work best to foster such activity.

Despite this lack of detailed knowledge, there is wide agreement on a few general principles:

The best parent-education programs seek to effect lasting change in family behavior patterns that continue after program support services are reduced or withdrawn.

They also seek to reach parents and families before inexperience or damaging behavior patterns cause serious harm to youngsters' emotional, physical, and educational development.

Both the Arkansas (HIPPY) and Missouri (PAT) programs discussed in this handbook fit this category. Such long-term family changes hold the promise of lasting positive effects on parent-child interaction.

One widely publicized program, created by Dr. James P. Comer at the Yale University Child Study Center, brings parents, teachers, mental-health professionals, and others together in an attempt to bridge the social and cultural gap between them. According to Comer (1980), this gap is a major cause of weak academic performance by low-income children. This program fits both the school-involvement and parent-education categories.

In two participating New Haven schools that serve primarily low-income families, parents were involved in school decision making and various other programs to serve school needs. In addition to improving student attendance and achievement, Comer found that many parents became so motivated that some who had never completed high school obtained general equivalency diplomas (GEDs), and a few completed college and received professional degrees.

A number of important questions about parent-education programs still need to be resolved, including:

1. The **age of children** at which to intervene and the types of activities that are most beneficial;

2. The most **cost-effective "intensity"** of such a program, in terms of number and duration of meetings with parents; and

3. Whether the **scope of such programs** ought to include all families or only those below a certain income level.

Researchers have not yet definitively answered either question 1 or 2, and question 3 has political overtones because restricting availability may also limit support for a program. Of course, answers to all these questions have important implications for the total cost of any program.

Choice

Choice among schools is one of the most popular, and most debated education reforms considered by state legislatures. According to a 1990 Gallup poll, 62 percent of Americans favor granting parents the right to choose among public schools for their children while only 31 percent are opposed (Elam 1990). Among minorities, 72 percent favor choice and 18 percent are opposed.

It is helpful, however, to be precise in defining what we mean by "choice." In the broadest sense, some types of educational choice have existed in the U.S. for many years. Students and parents have long had at least some say over what courses students take at the high school level and parents can choose to educate their children at home. Magnet schools have been created in many states both for academic reasons and to encourage racial integration. At the postsecondary level, students may choose among a variety of public and private institutions; in many cases, with the help of government grants or loans.

Those with sufficient financial resources have always had the option to send their children to private schools at their own expense, or to move to an area with superior public schools. What is at issue then in the choice debate is whether *all* parents should be empowered to send their children to public schools to which they would not normally be assigned, or to use public funds to send their children to private schools. This latter option is already common in a number of foreign countries: the Netherlands, Australia, and Great Britain, among others, provide forms of publicly aided education choice that include nongovernmental schools.

In a radical departure for its time—in the United States—Public School District 4 in East Harlem, New York City, turned all its junior high schools into "magnets" between 1974 and 1982. Enterprising teachers were encouraged to create several small, distinctive schools within buildings that had previously housed only one school. These were managed with minimal intrusion from district officials; parents and students chose which school to attend. Since doing so, District 4 pupils have improved their academic performance substantially. Other localities have experimented with choice as well, including Cambridge and Fall River, Massachusetts. In the past few years, a number of states have adopted legislation that requires local districts to allow students to attend schools in other districts, usually with some rules and constraints. Minnesota was the first to do so; Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Idaho, and Utah followed. Ohio passed a law that requires districts to allow students to attend any school *within* their district; Washington passed a similar, though more restricted, plan.

Private School Choice. In the United States nearly all recent reform measures for choice among schools have been concentrated exclusively within the framework of the public school system. But in a highly publicized measure, the Wisconsin legislature passed a bill in March of 1990 that extended to 1,000 low-income Milwaukee residents the right to choose non-sectarian *private* schools at public expense. Opponents brought legal action challenging the plan, lost in state trial court, but subsequently won a reversal in appeals court. The case is under appeal to the state supreme court. In Oregon, a 1990 ballot initiative that would have mandated choice for all public and private schools was defeated in the election. Its supporters argue that choice among private schools addresses one major weakness of choice only among public schools. The benefits of allowing parents and students to choose among schools—the demand-side—are sharply constrained by limiting available schools —the supply-side—to just one variety, those run by government agencies. The "supply" of schools must also be allowed to respond to the wishes of "consumers." Schools that parents and students have no interest in attending must close, and schools that are preferred must grow or multiply. Proponents, like Ted Kolderie of the Center for Policy Studies (1990), contend that enlarging the scope of choice to include nongovernmental schools is the surest way to accomplish growth.

Policy Implications. Any decision to permit choice, whether limited to government schools, as in Minnesota, or those that include private schools, such as in Wisconsin, poses many important issues at the state level:

How do parents get reliable information about the quality of different schools?

Will schools be permitted to select among applicants? If so, by what criteria?

How are public funds to be transferred and at what level of funding? Will this transfer include local as well as state funds?

How should handicapped students be accommodated?

Should controls be imposed for racial balance?

How will transportation concerns be addressed?

What happens to public schools that no one wants to attend? Over-subscribed schools?

School choice carries many implications for other aspects of reform. If families are permitted to choose among public schools, the schools should be permitted to provide students with authentic options from which to choose. Educators who wish to experiment with new approaches need encouragement; regulations or contracts that minimize those differences should be rethought.

While choice advocates often focus on the benefits likely to accrue to students and parents as a result of various choice systems, researchers find that choice also results in substantial benefits to teachers, providing them with more enjoyable working conditions.(Raywid 1989). Others see options for teachers to capitalize on market opportunities, as schools, classrooms, and teaching itself are allowed to change and adapt to different students and circumstances (Heid & Leak 1991).

Criticisms of Choice. Critics raise a number of concerns about choice, arguing that it may result in massive systemic dislocations and may chiefly benefit students from middle-class families while children from disadvantaged families will be left behind in bad schools. When assessing such claims it is helpful to examine choice plans in other countries. In Scotland, where choice was implemented in 1981, the middle class, for the most part, continues to send its children to schools to which they are normally assigned. Those taking the most advantage of choice are ambitious blue-collar and lower-class families—55 percent of requested transfers. Few schools have actually been closed as a result of students forsaking them and the overall percentage of students transferring is only 2 percent, about the same figure as in other European countries with choice. In Minnesota's Open Enrollment Program, a little less than one percent of eligible students chose to transfer in 1990–91, the first year of full implementation, though that figure marks a sharp increase from the previous year, when only 0.5 percent transferred.

If only a small percentage of students actually take advantage of the program and choose another school, one may ask, why bother? Choice supporters argue that choice is not intended to induce multitudes of students to transfer in and out of schools. Such a result would amount to chaos, and besides, is unnecessary for a choice-programs success. Merely having the option to remove their child from an unsatisfactory school, empowers parents in that school. Schools tend to listen to parents' concerns in order to forestall such a transfer.

Choice proponents John Chubb of the Brookings Institution and Terry Moe of Stanford University argue that because some parents make an informed decision, sometimes deciding to transfer their children to another school, even parents who might know or care little about school quality, and who would automatically enroll their children in the school nearest their home or place of employment nonetheless choose among schools that survive a competitive test.

For analogy, they cite supermarket shoppers who are too hasty to read labels or compare unit prices, but who clearly benefit because others are more careful.

Interconnections Between Types of Parent Enabling

Efforts to improve parents' ability to affect their children's education positively, through direct education and counseling, complement reforms such as choice and increased parent involvement in schools. Parents who feel better able to assist their children's education are apt to feel more competent to judge what type of school is best for them and may even wish to participate in school programs and decision making. Parents who gain increased awareness of the importance of their children's education, a stated goal of nearly all type 1 and type 2 programs, may want something to say about *which* school their children attend.

When designing state-level policy about parent enabling, policymakers often find themselves breaking new ground. The lines between the public and private spheres are in great flux and new ways to perceive the state role change constantly. The relation between state-and local-government roles in this area of policymaking is also hazy. Particularly with respect to programs falling into categories 1 and 2, efforts can be tailored to specific needs at the local level. State policymakers, however, play an important role in guiding, encouraging, and helping fund promising programs.

TENNESSEE

In a statewide initiative adopted in 1986, the Tennessee legislature appropriated $1 million to support parent-enabling programs that emphasize involvement in schools, parent education, or both (types 1 and 2 outlined in the introduction). The appropriation, which did not specify the types of programs on which funds would be spent, was disbursed through grants to local school districts that wished either to expand functioning local programs or to create new ones. Eleven programs at 17 sites were funded. After the second year of operation, funding stabilized at $500,000 (for reasons apparently unrelated to the program).

Key features of the Tennessee reforms are local discretion and design. Two program categories are funded. The first consists of seven variegated programs:

Three are primarily parent-education programs.

One adds a parent-education component to a pre-school enrichment program.

Another screens pre-kindergarten children for physical and mental disorders and trains parents in remedial activities.

Two focus on engaging parents in schools and other formal education aspects.

The second category disbursed funds for local districts wishing to implement programs from a list of three chosen by state officials. These three, chosen from existing models in other states, included *Active Parenting*, *New Parents as Teachers*, and *Operation Fail-Safe*.

Active Parenting, developed by Michael H. Popkin, is distributed through Active Parenting, Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia and is based on a videotaped parent-education series that discusses topics related to children's education, including problems young people encounter, and approaches that create better home-school environment It consists of six two–hour sessions and includes a coordinator who seeks to help parents with individual problems.

New Parents as Teachers emulates the parent-education program created in 1981 by the Missouri department of education and is discussed in the section devoted to that state.

Operation Fail-Safe seeks to create a feeling of shared accountability for students' education through a series of parent-teacher conferences. The program also involves more systematic parent and community involvement through committees composed of parents, teachers, and administrators; PTA groups; and outside business and civic groups. Though it concentrates on parent involvement in and with schools, it also seeks to train parents to track their children's interests, abilities, and progress in school. It is patterned after a program begun in Houston, Texas in 1978.

In addition to the programs funded under categories 1 and 2, six *Family Math* programs were created at teacher centers in various parts of the state. This program was developed at the University of California to help parents frustrated because they didn't understand the math their children were learning. Children and parents work together as a team to learn mathematical concepts and problem–solving skills. A typical course, taught by a teacher trained in the program, consists of six, one-to two-hour sessions.

Effects to Date

Tennessee's initiative was similar to most parent-enabling programs implemented to date in that it failed to include any systematic tracking of children over time; thus, no empirical results are available on the program's effect on children's school performance.

A tentative evaluation of the program was conducted less than a year after its implementation; it revealed generally positive, albeit fragmentary, results. A survey found that over 95 percent of parents agreed they

would recommend the program to other parents; overwhelming numbers felt their children's skills and attitudes also showed improvement —92 percent and 90 percent, respectively. The evaluation studied the total number of hours parents spent in contact with program personnel and calculated the cost for each program "parent contact hour." Programs that emphasized parent education rather than merely involvement in school activities were more expensive by this measure; since the quality of the time spent with program personnel was not evaluated—nor have results over time been compiled—no conclusions of effectiveness can be drawn.

As of this writing, Tennessee is about to consider a new set of education reforms, a significant part of which is expected to focus on further parent-enabling efforts. Though few details are available, the new package is likely to expand current efforts.

Missouri

The Missouri Parents as Teachers program, which provides education for parents with children up to three years old, is widely considered a good example of an effective early childhood services program. Representatives from school districts in 30 states have contacted the Parents as Teachers National Center in St. Louis for information or training, and at least 29 states are attempting similar projects. The program was implemented statewide as a part of the Early Childhood Development Act passed by the Missouri legislature in 1984.

Pilot Efforts

The program is based on the early childhood development research of Dr. Burton White, former director of the Harvard Preschool Project. Pilot programs were initiated in four Missouri school districts between 1981 and 1985, serving 380 first-time parents.

Participating parents were from a variety of financial, racial, and ethnic groups, and were drawn from urban, suburban, and rural populations.

An independent evaluation of the pilot programs in 1985 found impressive results:

Children of participating parents scored significantly higher on all intelligence, achievement, and auditory-comprehension measures; and on verbal and language ability, than did non-participating children.

Participating children ranked in the 75th percentile in mental processing and in the 85th percentile in school-related achievement, compared to a control group that scored in the 55th and 66th percentiles, respectively.

Children in the program performed well regardless of family income, race, or other factors.

Ninety-seven percent of parents in the pilot program said it made a significant difference in the way they perceive their roles as parents (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 1985).

A long-term study to track the progress of participating children throughout their formal education is underway. Results of the first follow-up tests, conducted in 1989, show that the original group of children tested in 1985 continues to show some benefits from their experience:

PAT children at the end of the first grade did better than a control group on a nationally normed commercial test in both reading (81st percentile vs. 77th percentile) and math (83rd percentile vs. 75th percentile), though these results seem to compare less favorably than those for children in the pilot program.

Parents in the program were far more involved with the school than parents in the control group, both in requested contacts with their children's teacher and in assisting with school activities.

Statewide Program

The 1984 Early Childhood Development Act expanded program eligibility to include all Missouri parents of children from birth to age three —with a less-intensive program for children ages three and four—and funded it to reach 10 percent of those eligible in 1985. Though participation was voluntary, all school districts in the state were required to offer program services. The percentage of eligible families funded was expanded to its current level of 30 percent (50,000 families served). Total costs per family are estimated at approximately $300 a year, of which the state pays approximately $170, with the rest covered by local agencies. The program includes:

1. **Personal visits** with parents and children by "parent educators," parents of young children themselves, trained by a program support center at the University of Missouri. State guidelines call on districts to offer eight contacts a year. For full state funding, at least five are required, of which no fewer than three must be in the home. These visits are meant to allow parent-educators to develop personal relationships with both parents and children. Parent-educators help monitor children's development and offer advice on subjects as wide ranging as discipline, toilet training and language development. Parent-educators use a program-designed handout to discuss with the parent the child's stage of development; what he or she can be expected to learn in this period, such as language skills, numbers, shapes; and how the parent can help.

2. **Group meetings** at a local center or school allow parents to share experiences and advise each other. These are usually structured around a video presentation or outside speaker on child development. Referral services to doctors or other child specialists are provided as necessary.

3. **Screening**, performed at appropriate intervals, monitors children's development in specific areas, such as hearing, vision, language, and hand-eye coordination.

4. **Drop-in times** at local Parents as Teachers centers or schools, allow parents to bring in children for play times while they ask the staff questions or talk with other parents.

An evaluation of the statewide program is underway and involves at least 37 districts, including St. Louis and Kansas City. Though final results are not available, local reaction to the program has been so positive that 280 Missouri districts (out of 540) now provide more services than required by the state funding formula. (CSG Innovations 1989).

Future Directions

One important change, made since implementation, is local program adaptation to specific groups, particularly teen mothers. Though there are no statistical data yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that Parents as Teachers is having a beneficial effect on repeat teen pregnancy, dropout rates, and levels of child abuse. One group in St. Louis, for example, noted that of 95 participating teen mothers, only five had a repeat pregnancy, compared to a 50-percent rate nationally. A comparison study is planned by St. Louis to study repeat pregnancy and dropout rates for participating and non-participating teen mothers. (CSG Innovations 1989).

Other lessons include the importance of local support for successful implementation and the difficulty of getting parents, particularly low-income parents, to take the first step to join. Additional funds are targeted at hard-to-reach, low-income families.

Cautions

Despite early successes, critics caution that results in the statewide program may not match those in the pilot. Far less money is spent per participant in the statewide program: $300 per child, compared to $1,000 per child spent in the pilot. Hence, training and certain services have been reduced, even though the structure of the program remains

constant. The program was expanded to include children with handicaps and "extraordinary" needs. Both were criticized by the program's designer, Burton White, who argues that underfunding damages the quality of the program and that it was designed for children without special needs (CSG Innovations 1989).

ARKANSAS

In Arkansas, an innovative parent-education program, the Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters, was implemented at 24 sites, more than any other state. Though not state funded, it was popularized through an aggressive publicity campaign by Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton.

The Arkansas program aims to help parents of four and five year olds become active participants in the education of their children. According to Clinton, the program seeks to "break the cycle of under-education, unemployment and poverty." The degree to which the program is targeted toward low-income families, however, varies depending on its local funding source.

HIPPY programs in the United States began in 1984 and are patterned after a research project begun in 1969 at Hebrew University in Jerusalem by Dr. Avima D. Lombard (Lombard 1981). HIPPY programs exist in Israel—with over 10,000 families served—in the Netherlands, Chile, South Africa and Turkey. Prior to the establishment the HIPPY USA, in New York in 1988, licenses and materials and training for local HIPPY programs could be obtained only from the HIPPY office at Hebrew University in Israel. The New York office now handles all U.S. licensing, training, and materials distribution. Though the program is non-profit, HIPPY charges a fee to help cover its expenses According to HIPPY USA, 42 sites in 16 states serve over 4,000 families. (David Leonard, personal communication, Sept. 1990).

Funding

The statewide HIPPY office in Arkansas reports the program typically costs close to $1,000 per family served each year. (Michele French, personal communication, Aug. 1990). Ten local HIPPY programs in Arkansas are organized either by the school district or by a community agency, both of which typically donate certain "in kind" services, such as space in a building, that cover as much as half of the total cost. In addition to these local sources, federal funds are a mainstay of many programs. Funds are available through the Job Training Partnership Act, chapter 1; Head Start; and the new Child Care and Development Block Grant. Local programs financed with Head Start funds concentrate on low-income families while other programs vary in focus.

Materials and Format

HIPPY is designed for children ages four and five; the second year is meant to coincide with the year the child is in kindergarten. One parent is instructed how to use the HIPPY materials by a trained parent from the same community who also has a child in the program. These materials include storybooks—parents are taught to ask their children questions about content, vocabulary, and concepts—worksheets with visual, auditory, and tactile exercises; and problem-solving exercises that ask children to list and match attributes and ideas. Instruction is accomplished through role-playing, so that parents with limited reading skills can participate. An important aspect of the program is that parents are learning to teach their children specific lessons, not just being trained in general parenting skills. Instructional materials increase in sophistication over the program's two-year duration.

Program Intensity

Parents are trained four times a month by a HIPPY paraprofessional, twice in their own

homes and twice at a nearby meeting site with other parents. Training sessions teach parents their children's lessons for the next week and typically last between 15 and 20 minutes. Parents are asked to work with their children at least 15 minutes a day, five days a week. The full program lasts 30 weeks a year for two years.

Support groups are also integral to the process. During the two monthly group meetings, parents have the opportunity to meet other parents in the program. They are encouraged to share their experiences, discuss problems, and help each other define goals. According to organizers, many poor parents are surprised and pleased to find they can play a positive role in their children's education.

Evaluations

Though definitive results are not yet available, initial tests in one of the four original Arkansas sites show substantial gains for children who participate in the program. In 16 months of HIPPY instruction, children at one site posted a 33-month cognitive gain. In the fall of 1986, only six percent of the children at this site scored above the norm prior to entering the program; by the spring of 1988, 74 percent—still in their second year of the program—scored above the norm. This is not the only evidence of improvement. According to the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, preliminary results indicate that HIPPY children in kindergarten have "much higher than expected" scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test, one of the major commercial standardized tests (Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration 1988). One important difficulty with these studies, however, is that both were based on a very small number of students.

One of the largest HIPPY sites in Arkansas (with over 350 children) is organized in the Little Rock school district. It conducted its own evaluation of the program by testing all children who had passed through the program and found very positive results. (Miriam Shead, personal communication, Sept. 1990).

Little Rock also plans to measure the long-term effects of the program by tracking the children who attend HIPPY and testing them at grades three, six, nine, and 12. Without such an effort, Little Rock administrators observe, there is no way to know whether students achieve long-term gains.

Future Directions

At the encouragement of the state office, many local HIPPY sites are shifting the program focus to include the growth and development of parents as well as children. They are making this change based on lessons they learned about the importance to children of their parents' long-term financial stability and success. They hope for increased parent involvement throughout children's education as well as reduced dropout levels and superior achievement.

MINNESOTA

Minnesota's choice programs have been hailed by educators across the country as innovative attempts to provide students and their families with a variety of enrollments from which to choose. There are five programs:

School District Enrollment Options. Open Enrollment permits students in all grades to apply to transfer to any public school or educational program in Minnesota, regardless of district boundaries.

Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) allows high school students to attend a college or technical institute, either full- or part-time, free of charge.

Area Learning Centers and Alternative Programs are two nontraditional educational

options which Minnesota youngsters may choose in place of school. Both Area Learning Centers—there are approximately 20 in the state—and Alternative Programs, approximately 40 statewide—offer individualized learning programs that include academic classes that use alternative methods or vocational training.

High School Graduation Incentives (for students aged 12–20) and Diploma Opportunities For Adults Aged 21 And Over allow poorly performing students to earn high school diplomas in a variety of alternative schools and programs.

Educational Program For Minor Parents And Pregnant Minors appoints a case manager to develop, with each participant, an individualized program that enables the student to earn a high school diploma.

School District Enrollment Options

Minnesota's Open Enrollment program developed gradually. In 1987, Governor Rudy Perpich encouraged local school boards to voluntarily pursue open enrollment policies and about one third of them agreed. In 1988, the legislature passed the School District Enrollment Options Act, which mandated that in 1989–1990 all districts with more than 1,000 pupils would adopt open enrollment and, beginning in 1990–1991, all districts would have open-enrollment policies.

Under the act all Minnesota school districts must allow parents to send their children to schools of their choice regardless of district boundaries. There are two exceptions—districts that operate under desegregation plans, and districts that declare themselves "closed" by vote of the local school board, though the latter may only limit *incoming* students. In the 1989–90 transitional year, only districts with enrollments larger than 1,000 were required to participate. While it is too early to discern learning gains for Minnesota pupils, a preliminary look at implementation of the act is possible.

Few districts have made use of the option to declare themselves "closed." In 1988–89, just two voted to close themselves to nonresident students. Only one relatively small district was closed in 1989–90 and it seems to be the only one closed in 1990–1991.

Districts may reject nonresident students due to lack of space in a grade-level, program, school, or district. They may not make their decision on the basis of previous academic achievement, extracurricular activity (including athletics), behavioral problems, disability conditions or English language proficiency. Deadlines for students who apply to transfer, and for districts to respond, are included in the statute.

Participation

Table I shows the number of students and districts participating in the choice plan. The number of students participating in the 1990–91 school year represented nearly one percent of eligible students.

Table I

Open Enrollment Participation, By Students and Districts

School Year	Districts Participating	Students
1987–88	95	140
1988–89	153	435
1989–90	345	3,200
1990–91	433	6,130

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

Three districts operate under desegregation plans—Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. These districts have the right to bar students from entering or leaving if the transfer adversely affects compliance with the plan. If they do so, they must notify the pupil's parent or guardian and (where appropriate) the pupil's resident district.

There was much concern when the reform act was passed about what effect choice would have on these three districts. Table I indicates

the number of pupils who have transferred in and out of these districts in the 1989–90 school year. The only district where there is a significant net effect is St. Paul. It seems, however, that a significant number of the departing students enrolled in local parochial schools; but, as residents of the district, they are included in the figures. Of the three districts, only Minneapolis found it necessary to deny permission to a significant number of transfer applicants to maintain its desegregation plan (Barbara Zohn, personal communication, June 19, 1990).

School District Enrollment Options Funding

If parents choose to transfer their child to a school in another district, the general education revenue and capital expenditure revenue that would normally go to the resident district are channeled instead to the district of attendance. Although state aid revenue transfers are made, the total amount earned is transferred to the district the student attends. Minnesota's general education revenue in 1990–91 is $2,953 for an elementary student and $3,987 for a secondary student. For a handicapped student, the resident district is required to pay any costs above those for which the district of attendance is reimbursed.

School District Enrollment Options Transportation

Transportation is a major concern if a choice plan is to work over long distances, particularly for families of limited means. The original 1988 act required the non resident district to provide transportation from its border to the school and provided it with additional state aid for this purpose. It left parents responsible to bring their child to the border of the non resident district, with the stipulation that families below the poverty level could claim reimbursement from the state.

A recent amendment allows the nonresident district to transport children from within the resident district, should it wish to do so. The resident district can refuse to permit this, but parents have a right to appeal such a decision. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, there are approximately 15 such appeals in process.

Postsecondary Enrollment Options

The PSEO program was created with two goals in mind:

1. To promote rigorous educational pursuits and

2. To increase the variety of options available to students.

It allows 11th- and 12th-grade high school students to enroll in one or more non sectarian courses at eligible institutions. Students wishing to participate in interscholastic sports must receive permission from the Minnesota State High School League, the association responsible for regulating high school competition.

Eligible Institutions

Eligible institutions include the University of Minnesota, all state universities, community colleges, and Minnesota two- or four-year liberal-arts, residential, degree-granting private institutions. Each sets its own admission standards, which individual students are responsible to fulfill—except nondiscrimination statutes with which all participating schools must comply. Schools must agree to accept students for the amount provided by the program funding formula, and may not levy additional charges even if their normal tuition exceeds the maximum allowed by the formula.

In practice, this tuition limit seems to have affected only some participating private colleges; state-funded institutions typically charge less than the maximum allowable by the program. Still, it makes economic sense for schools that charge a higher rate to

participate if the additional students simply fill previously under-enrolled courses. All major private postsecondary institutions in the state participate.

Participation

As indicated in Table II, enrollment in the postsecondary options program seems to have grown significantly since its inception in 1985. After quick growth in the program's first four years, enrollment slowed or reached a plateau of about 6,000 students. This number is approximately 5 percent of all eligible students, a substantial rate of participation for a choice program.

Table II

Postsecondary Options Program Participation

School Year	Participating Students
1985–1986	3,500
1986–1987	4,000
1987–1988	5,000
1988–1989	5,900
1989–1990	5,900
1990–1991	6,200

Source:Minnesota Department of Education

Postsecondary Enrollment Options Funding

A postsecondary institution participating in the program receives a percentage of the funds that the state would otherwise give to the student's high school, pro-rated for the degree to which the enrollment comprises a full schedule. The full amount is available for students enrolled full time (about 1,200 students, according to the state Department of Education). Also subtracted from high school funds is the amount the state reimburses the student for book costs. No state funds are available for room and board.

Postsecondary Enrollment Options Transportation

Reimbursement for transportation is available to families whose income does not exceed 135 percent of the federal poverty level. Fifty-thousand dollars are available for this purpose from a special state account and are not deducted from a local district's state funds.

Evaluation

The state commissioned an independent evaluation of the Postsecondary Options Program. Though the state assessed the program after only its first year of operation, the evaluation yielded some interesting findings. (Minnesota Department of Education 1987)

Students were overwhelmingly satisfied with the program—95 percent were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied,"and only one percent were "dissatisfied." The most frequently cited reason for choosing an institution was its proximity, and more students attended community colleges—49 percent—than any other type of institution. Participants were somewhat more likely to be children of well-educated parents, though 38 percent were young people whose fathers had completed high school at most. The program may be succeeding in offering students a more rigorous education: 77 percent found the postsecondary courses to be more challenging than their high school courses.

Broken down by the type of institution attended, students performed best and seemed most pleased with private colleges. They performed worst at community colleges. The grade point average of students was 3.18 at private colleges and 2.78 at community colleges (on a 4.00 scale). Students were most pleased with their experience at private colleges (76 percent), followed by the University of Minnesota (62 percent).

The biggest problem, according to students, was coordinating their high school schedule with postsecondary courses. The only group with a negative view of the program was teachers—51 percent were unsupportive, 49 percent supportive.

One positive result of the postsecondary options program seems to be greater effort on the part of many high schools to meet student interests in college-level courses. The number of advanced placement courses offered at the high school level has more than quadrupled (Monsanto 1989). In some cases, postsecondary institutions cooperated with high schools to create postsecondary courses taught at the high school.

WISCONSIN

In a surprise move, thus far unique in the nation, the Wisconsin legislature passed a choice plan in March 1990 that extends to some low-income parents of Milwaukee public school students the right to send their children to nonsectarian private schools at public expense. The program, which became operative in the 1990–91 school year, is the first major choice-based reform effort to include private elementary and secondary schools among its options.
The total number of students permitted to transfer under the program is limited to one percent of the enrollment of the Milwaukee public schools. For the 1990–91 school year, that meant approximately 1,000 students could apply to attend private schools.

Students Eligibility

To be eligible for participation, a K–12 student must reside in the Milwaukee school district and be a member of a family that has a total income no greater than 175 percent of the federal poverty level. In the previous school year the pupil must either have been enrolled in the Milwaukee public schools or have not yet entered school. Under the statute, the state superintendent is required to notify parents and students who reside in the Milwaukee district about the private schools participating in the program.

School Eligibility

To participate, a private school must notify the state superintendent of its intent to do so by June 30 of the previous academic year and must agree to fulfill these requirements:
1. Admit students to this program on a random basis,

2. Limit to not more than 49 percent of its total student population the number of pupils enrolled in this program,

3. Comply with federal nondiscrimination standards,

4. Meet all health and safety codes applicable to the public schools.

To continue participating after the first year, the reform bill mandates that each private school meet at least one of four standards for pupils in the program:

1. At least 70 percent advance one grade level each year,

2. The average attendance rate is at least 90 percent,

3. At least 80 percent demonstrate significant academic progress,

4. At least 70 percent of the pupils' families meet parent involvement criteria established by the private school.

To encourage "balanced representation" of participating pupils among different schools, a "pupil assignment council" is created by the act. It is to be composed of participating private school representatives and make annual recommendations to the schools for improving student representation.

URBAN DAY SCHOOL: PROFILE OF ONE AREA PRIVATE SCHOOL

Founded in 1967, Urban Day School is the oldest private, nonsectarian school in Milwaukee. It has a diverse student body composed of African Americans, Hispanics, Caucasians, and Native Americans. A majority of its student population comes from low-income, inner-city families. According to Urban Day, more than 98 percent of its graduates complete high school and over 50 percent go on to college.

Urban Day educates its pupils at a cost of approximately $3,300 per student, per year. But because of private donations, it is able to set tuition at $650 for those parents who meet its parent–involvement criteria.

Parental involvement is a key component in an Urban Day education—parents are required to perform at least 20 hours of volunteer work or pay an extra $300 per year. Parent committees play a role in formulating and implementing school policies. Other participating schools are not able to lower tuition by nearly as much, though most seek to encourage parental involvement.

One type of involvement is to serve on the board of directors that governs Urban Day. According to the school, the board, made up of community and corporate members as well as parents, plays an active role in all aspects of school decision making.

Urban Day had approximately 370 students in its pre–school to eighth grade program in the 1989–90 school year and received 225 applications from parents through the choice program. Out of the 487 students enrolled in 1990–91, 95 participate in the choice program. Urban Day pursues a policy of admitting students regardless of race, religion, national origin, sex, or disability.

Funding

The sum available to parents who wish to transfer their children to private school is the amount of per pupil aid the state normally gives to the Milwaukee school district. For each student choosing to use that money to attend a private school, the state will reduce aid to the Milwaukee district by an equal amount. In the 1990–91 school year that amount totals approximately $2,500 per pupil. Each participating private school must agree to accept $2,500 for each pupil it receives through the program, regardless of its regular tuition or expenses. Schools may not ask parents to cover any difference.

Despite the fact that $2,500 is half the amount spent by the public school system, it is close enough to the $3,100 average tuition at local private schools that, when added to the scholarships these schools often provide, it is expected to cover the schools' tuitions.Though the district loses state funding for each departing student, the amount spent from local sources is not affected. The result is that the district has more money to spend per pupil than previously.

Accountability

For the sake of public accountability, the reform act requires the state superintendent to monitor participating private schools to ensure they comply with the standards listed above, and authorizes him to conduct financial and performance evaluations. It further directs the Wisconsin legislative audit bureau to conduct financial and performance evaluations and furnish them to the legislature by January 15, 1995.

The state superintendent is also required to compile an annual report that compares the performance of pupils attending private schools under the program with Milwaukee public school students in five areas—academic achievement, daily attendance, dropout rate, percentage of pupils suspended and expelled, and extent of parental involvement activities. The report is to be distributed to the legislature and each participating private school.

Transportation

The act requires the Milwaukee school district to provide transportation to participating students who would have received it if they were attending public schools under comparable circumstances. The district can, however, apply for state aid under existing statutes to offset this cost.

First-Year Participation

In the 1990–91 school year, the reform plan's first year in operation, 391 low-income children enrolled in eight participating private schools. Though significantly less than the 1,000 pupils envisioned by architects of choice legislation, it was not for lack of interest on the part of potential students—almost 1,100 applied to participate in the program. Most were turned away due to lack of space at participating schools. Proponents of the plan, including some of the participating private schools, point to the program's uncertain legal climate as the main reason for the limited number of openings. They look forward to substantially increased participation in the 1991–92 school year.

Early Hurdles

The Wisconsin reform plan encountered a number of obstacles almost immediately after its passage. It faced vocal opposition from the state superintendent and a suit was filed in state court to prevent implementation by the Wisconsin Education Association—the state teachers union—as well as several other groups and individuals. In August 1990, a state trial court ruled against the plaintiffs, finding that the reform act did not violate the Wisconsin constitution or other state legal doctrines, and ordered the superintendent to cease activities that the private schools asserted were intended to prevent the program's success.

In November of the same year a state court of appeals reversed that decision, on the technical grounds that the bill was improperly passed as part of a legislative package containing unrelated legislation, though it did not rule against any of the choice plan's substantive provisions. The case is in appeal to the state supreme court; meanwhile, the plan continues to operate. Political support for the choice plan seems strong—a bipartisan, 76-member panel on school improvement appointed by the governor recommended that the Milwaukee choice plan not only continue, but that it be extended to three other districts.

Despite the current status of the case, it is worth examining the two salient legal issues and the superintendent's opposition in some detail: both highlight important aspects of any similar choice package and some likely forms of opposition. The legal questions address the subjects of uniformity and accountability; the superintendent's actions concern what is a reasonable burden to place on individual schools with regard to severely handicapped students.

Severely Handicapped Students. In the application forms he created for private schools to notify the state of their intent to participate, the superintendent stipulated, in effect, that interested schools must agree to accept responsibility to educate all types of handicapped students, no matter how severe the handicap. This requirement was successfully challenged in court by the interested private schools.

As the Wisconsin choice statute is now structured, private schools must accept students on a random basis; the case of handicapped students is left unclear. There is no stipulation that additional funds be provided for them. Even if extra money were available, a number of interested private schools argued, the cost of appropriate personnel and facilities for the most severely handicapped pupils would likely be prohibitive. In its decision, the lower court ruled that the superintendent's requirements regarding handicapped students had placed an undue burden on the private schools.

Uniformity and Accountability. In their petition, plaintiffs seeking to block the reform act argued that private schools would not be required to comply with the many regulations that public schools must obey (such as the licensing of teachers and specific curriculum guidelines). This lack of equal regulation, they claimed, would result in an improper expenditure of public funds without accountability and, further, would violate a clause of the Wisconsin constitution which requires that the state establish district schools that are as nearly uniform as practicable.

One of the central arguments for choice, however, is that it would encourage experimentation and difference in precisely some of the items cited in the complaint, thus providing parents with a range of viable options from which to choose. If the schools must provide precisely the same services as district public schools, they would scarcely be "private" and couldn't serve their function to provide alternatives.

The question of what kind of accountability mechanism to include is also central to the reform act. As noted in the accompanying handbook, *Accountability In Education*, there is a developing consensus among scholars that educational accountability must shift its focus from a preoccupation with "inputs," such as number of hours spent on a subject or course credits required for teacher licensing, to "outputs" like student test scores and drop–out rates. As described previously, the Wisconsin legislation requires just such a comparison of outputs in an annual report from the state superintendent and disqualifies from further participation any private school that fails to meet four requirements, three of them output measures. Of course, parents also may remove their child from any participating private school if they do not believe it serves the child's best interests.

The Wisconsin choice bill represents one way to extend choice to private schools. Some experts believe that a number of legal questions that involve the direct transfer of public funds to private institutions could be avoided if an alternative funding mechanism were employed. One proposed solution is to use refundable tax credits that poor families would receive as payment from the state. Though families might have to show proof that the money was used for their children's schooling, it would be them paying the tuition, not the state. An unsuccessful initiative on the November 1990 ballot in Oregon would have created a plan along these lines. A number of other variations are possible, but their prospects for withstanding legal challenge depend on the legal system as well as the unpredictable course of jurisprudence in this field.

CONCLUSION

The state role in parent enabling is undergoing significant change. Policymakers are increasingly active in seeking to foster helpful parental involvement activities, but they find they must step gingerly in what was formerly considered almost an exclusively private arena. This is true particularly with policies that involve activities in the home. The purpose of parent-enabling policies is to strengthen and focus the parental role, *not* to replace it. Parent-enabling strategies have important implications for educators and social policy. As described in the introduction, policies that empower-parents in their children's education in one domain tend to buttress the role of parents in others. Accountability policies, such as state assessments for individual students, that provide parents with regular assessments of how well their children are doing in school, also function as parent-enabling policies because they give parents a basis on which to change their (and their children's) behavior if school results are unsatisfactory. School report cards that portray the performance of local schools also enable parents to interact with those schools on a more informed basis and to more rationally choose a different school for their children. Though discussed in separate handbooks, many such policies have repercussions that cannot be neatly categorized into different areas of reform. Thus, education reform is best considered as a total package, and policies in different realms of education need to be designed to enhance each other.

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The opinions and observations expressed in the series, *Better Education Through Informed Legislation*, are those of the author and do not reflect the policies or opinions of the U.S. Department of Education.

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State Policies for School Restructuring—third in the series, *Better Education Through Informed Legislation*—explores state-level policies that aim to achieve education goals by reorganizing the way learning happens. *Restructuring* discusses philosophy; considers decision-making, curriculum, instruction, and teaching reforms; and explores whether such popular policy responses as site-based management and charter schools contribute to reform goals. It will be available from the National Conference of State Legislatures in the fall of 1991.

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